

Living the Peace We Long For

Spring 2024

*“In this community, we ...
are not there yet”*

Our faith grounds us in the belief that one day, we will awaken to the unimaginable transformation promised by God, a new earth, a ‘community of life’ that includes all of creation. Although the world we long for is ‘not here yet’, the ‘not here yet’ is not a place to settle.

Longing for this time is more than a place of helpless emptiness. Waiting and believing, energized by God’s promise, produce signs of our hoped-for world and make this possibility already present among us.

We are familiar with Jesus’ call to provide food for the hungry and shelter for the homeless, to give relief to prisoners, heal the sick, welcome strangers, care for neighbors in need, and include those shunned by society. Our responses take the shape of seeking encounters that heal polarization and division, violence against children, women, and men, and harm to the earth.

More personally, we are bidden to live more fully human so that we can perceive others in their full humanity. We are called to settle up the conflicts in our lives, forgive the ones we find it hard to talk to, and offer grace.



Sisters Eunice Cudzewicz and Frankie Vaughan created this installation in the North America chapel in December 2023. MMS reflections on the words included “Liturgy is a public prayer – a prayer for angst and a prayer for need. We pray for forgiveness and conversion. We need to pray for, act for, move toward where we are not yet. Small acts of loving kindness make a difference.”

It Is Up to Us, the Younger Generation...

written by Gail Stewardson, Society Fundraiser

With great anticipation, children and young people living with HIV and a group of their peers looked forward to their second “camp”, as the youth gatherings are known in and around Ang’iya, Kenya. Funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters and organized by Sister Rosemary Adhiambo and her colleagues at the Good Shepherd Dispensary, this gathering took place from December 27-30, 2023.

Altogether, 134 children and young people, ages 7 to 24 years, participated in the four-day camp, learning about Sustainable Development Goal 13 on Climate Action and how to “go green” in and around Ang’iya. Damage to the environment and human health occurs daily in this rural region, where people depend predominantly on firewood for cooking. During their days together, the youth discussed how this cooking method is causing forest degradation and loss, air pollution, and health implications. Conversations included the sobering reality that the use of cleaner forms of energy for cooking is rarely explored in their home county of Homa Bay.

Feeling a sense of urgency and with abundant enthusiasm, the campers agreed that it is now up to them, the younger generation, to lead the way in addressing local environmental issues. They wanted to learn how to use clean cooking stoves to manage household energy, and to make ecologically friendly briquettes from leftover vegetables and other waste products such as potato peelings, banana skins, etc. One of the camp highlights came when the youth went out to the neighboring villages and, with great pride, demonstrated their new clean cooking skills to local households.



Campers engage in climate action and advocacy. Pictured Right: Children hold up their thriving tree saplings. In the bottom right photo children hold up their thriving tree saplings.

As a result of the youth gatherings and the children and youth's persistence, the importance of environmental stewardship is beginning to permeate the local villages. One teenager was very excited to recount how, as a result of the first camp's activities, a new environmental club had been set up at her school. Members of the club are eager to plant more trees in the local area. Having been given fruit saplings at the first camp, other camp participants reported how they planted the trees at home, where they are watering and keeping watch over the trees as they grow.

Two teenagers living with HIV, ages 15 and 17, were invited to speak for an hour on the importance of climate action on a local radio show hosted by the Diocese of Homa Bay. The show has a very wide outreach across many households at 8:30 in the morning. For one hour, in a very interactive and lively interview, the teens answered questions about the camps and why they believe it is important to 'go green' in today's world. They highlighted their own particular environmental concerns and were encouraged to propose renewable energy solutions. This was the first time young people's voices were heard in the local climate change debate, discussing its impacts and sharing, with confidence, key facts and SDG commitments.



Speaking on behalf of their peers, the two young advocates were delighted to be given this unique opportunity to speak up for the environment on the radio. Their radio spot occurred only two weeks after world leaders had discussed global concerns about the environment at COP28; UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres described how the COP28 was happening at a decisive moment in the fight against climate crisis. In a world where, in his words, we cannot afford delays, indecision, or half-measures, we are even more inspired by the 134 children and youth in Ang'iya who are energized and passionate about bringing creative and effective solutions to the destructive effects of climate change in their home area.

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“We are meant to give our hearts away. When we leave a place, it breaks our hearts. We come home and grow them up again and then give them away again. It is what we do.”

Sister Vera Sheenan

Left: Sister Ursula Maier is a pediatrician from Unit Germany/UK. She has been working at the Holy Family Hospital in Techiman, Ghana since 2009.

Photo Credit: Kathryn Swartz